

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing navigational information for facilitating navigation and user socialization at web sites, the method being utilized in a computer networking system having one or more central processing units, one or more memories, and one or more network connections, the method comprising steps of:

creating at least one instance of a mapping data structure for a web site, the created mapping data structure representing two or more categories, each of the two or more categories divided into subcategories of ordered levels of specificity, each of the ordered levels of specificity being a grouping of subcategories of the same levels of specificity;

generating a graphical representation of said at least one instance of said mapping data structure, said generated graphical representation graphically depicting each of the two or more categories and its subcategories mapped to each within a corresponding pie segment ~~and the subcategories within a plurality of categories of the two or more categories~~, wherein the subcategories of each of the two or more categories are separated by subrings; ~~and~~

mapping information about people, activities, and social interactions at the web site onto a plurality of icons in said graphical representation ~~for facilitating user socialization;~~

selecting one of the plurality of icons by a user; and

returning additional information of people, activities or social interactions corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of icons, wherein the returned additional information comprises information facilitating socialization between the user with people, activities or social interactions corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of icons.

2. (Currently Amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein said mapping data structure includes one or more sections, the sections being logical intersections of one of the two or more categories with one of the levels of specificity.

3. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 2, wherein one or more subcategories

have a degree of closeness relating the section to one or more other sections.

4. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 3, wherein the degree of closeness relates to any one or more of following: a physical closeness of location of physical items represented by the respective sections, a relational closeness between one or more users and one or more objects, a relational closeness between one or more users, a semantic closeness of descriptions of items represented by the respective sections, and a behavioral closeness of pattern of use.

5. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 1, wherein the categories include any one or more of the following: a product category, a service category, a category class, a category list, a product class, a list of products in a class, a product specification, a service class, a list of services, and a service specification.

6. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 1, wherein the levels of specificity include any one or more of the following: category class, category list, offering specification, product class, list of products in a class, product specification, service class, list of services, and a service specification.

7. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 1, further comprising a step of collecting information about one or more nodes located on one or more districts.

8. (Previously Presented) A system, as in claim 7, wherein the nodes are differentiated by any one or more node functions.

9. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 8, wherein the node functions include any one or more of the following: initiating a chat session, providing information, causing a user to be associated with a node location, providing access to sales information, providing access to a

salesman, and changing a browser page to one that has information relating to the node.

10. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 7, wherein one or more of the nodes is a landmark that marks a salient location on one or more of the districts.

11. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 10, wherein the salient location is fixed and associated with one of a plurality of business categories.

12. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 10, wherein the salient location can change in time and is associated with an activity.

13. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 12, wherein the activity is any one or more of the following: a current "hot spot", "a list of most popular pages in a computer section", a public chat, a sale, a special product offering, a special service offering, and a sales agent availability.

14. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 10, wherein the salient location is personally meaningful to a user.

15. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 14, wherein the salient location represents any one or more of the following: a user's buddy, a chat buddy, a private chat, a user's favorite spot, and a user with common interest.

16. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 7, further comprising a step of generating one or more paths, each path connecting two or more nodes.

17. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 16, wherein the path links two or more of the nodes to associate connectivity relationships among the nodes.

18. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 16, wherein a path is associated with one of the following: a user's path through one or more of the districts, a customer's path through one or more of the districts, a preferred path of a group of users through one or more of the districts, a preferred path of a group of users with common interests through one or more of the districts, and a preferred path of a group of users with complementary interests through one or more of the districts.

19. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 7, further comprising a step of grouping said one or more nodes into one or more node sets, each node set containing one or more nodes clustered in nearby locations in one or more of the districts.

20. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 19, wherein a node set represents a relationship among two or more nodes located in one or more of the districts.

21. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 19, wherein one or more of the node sets is associated with one of the following: a density of users gathered in one or more adjacent node locations, a set of node locations marking results of a search, a set of node locations related by a semantic attribute, a set of node locations visited by a group of users with common interests, a set of node locations visited by a group of users with complementary interests, and a crowd of users.

22. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 19, wherein one or more of the node sets has a node set function.

23. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 22, wherein the node set function includes any one or more of the following: providing information about the set, changing a user's location to be associated with a node location in the set, and changing a browser page to one that

has information relating to a node in the set.

24. (Previously Presented) A method, as in claim 1, where the instance of the mapping data structure is served over one or more of the network connections for display of one or more visual districts on one or more clients.

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Currently Amended) A computer storage medium product for storing a computer program comprising the steps of:

creating an instance of a mapping data structure for a given web site, the created mapping data structure representing two or more categories by dividing each of the two or more categories into subcategories of ordered levels of specificity;

dividing each of the ordered levels of specificity into a grouping of subcategories of the same levels of specificity;

displaying the subcategories and the grouping of subcategories by level of specificity in a geometric pattern such that the subcategories are defined by subrings and are graphically depicted within a corresponding category mapped to a corresponding pie segment ~~of the two or more categories~~ of the two or more categories; and

mapping information about people, activities, and social interactions at the web site onto a plurality of icons in said geometric pattern;

selecting one of the plurality of icons by a user; and

returning additional information of people, activities or social interactions corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of icons, wherein the returned additional information comprises information facilitating socialization between the user with people, activities or social interactions corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of icons.

27. (Currently Amended) A computer system having a processor for implementing an

application program, comprising:

means for creating an instance of a mapping data structure for a given web site, the created mapping data structure representing two or more categories by dividing each of the two or more categories into subcategories of ordered levels of specificity;

means for dividing each of the ordered levels of specificity into a grouping of subcategories of the same levels of specificity;

means for displaying the subcategories and the grouping of subcategories by level of specificity in a geometric pattern such that the subcategories are defined by subrings and are graphically depicted within a corresponding category mapped to a corresponding pie segment of ~~the two or more categories~~; and

means for mapping information about people, activities, and social interactions at the web site onto a plurality of icons in said geometric pattern;

selecting one of the plurality of icons by a user; and

returning additional information of people, activities or social interactions corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of icons, wherein the returned additional information comprises information facilitating socialization between the user with people, activities or social interactions corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of icons.